

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAJ-01 OMB-01 SAM-01 DRC-01 /104 W

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R 121515Z JUL 74

FM AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1988

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SGEN, SOCI, GR

SUBJECT: NORTHERN GREEK REACTION TO METROPOLITANS' OUSTER

REF: THESSALONIKI'S 0017, 020 AND 026.

1. ATHENS ACCOUNTS OF HOLY SYNOD'S DECISION JULY 11 TO DEPOSE NINE METROPOLITANS, INCLUDING LEONIDAS OF THESSALONIKI AND THREE OTHERS FROM MACEDONIA AND THRACE (ALEXANDROUPOLIS, KILKIS AND DIDIMOTICHON), UNDER MAJOR HEADLINES AND ACCOMPANIED BY PHOTOS OF LEONIDAS, SERAPHIM AND PANTELEIMON, DROVE OTHER NEWS ITEMS FROM FRONT PAGES OF TODAY'S THESSALONIKI PRESS.

2. ONLY EDITORIAL REACTION IS THAT OF VORRAS EDITOR KYROU WHO WROTE THAT "DRAMATIC DECISION" CLIMAXED DEVELOPMENTS "NOT CUSTOMARY EVEN FOR USUALLY TURBULENT SITUATIONS IN CHURCH". HE TERMED ARCHBISHOP SERAPHIM'S ACCUSATIONS "VERY SEVERE, UNHEARD OF" AND SHOULD BE "BASED ON UNSHAKEN PROOF. THE DEEPLY RELIGIOUS GREEK PEOPLE ARE ASTOUNDED" AND AWAIT NEXT EVENTS "IN AWE AND ABSOLUTE SILENCE". SAYING HE IS "SINCERELY GRIEVED" KYROU OBSERVES THIS IS NOT PROPER MOMENT TO ASSESS RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVENTS, BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT "BLOWS INFLICTED NOW ARE NOT AGAINST

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OPPONENTS OF GOVERNING GROUP OF CHURCH, BUT AGAINST

INSTITUTION OF CHURCH ITSELF".

3. COMMENT: LOCAL REACTION CENTERS NATURALLY ON DETHRONEMENT OF LEONIDAS AND RUNS GAMUT FROM GOVERNMENT OPPONENTS WHO VIEW OUSTER AS OVERDUE RETRIBUTION FOR POLITICALLY ACTIVE, PAPADOPOULOS-SUPPORTING CLERIC, TO THOSE WHO FEEL OUTRAGE OVER BRUTAL DISMISSAL OF SAINTLY, WELL-INTENDED MAN. SOME EXPRESSED VIEW THAT SERAPHIM'S MANNER AND LANGUAGE (E.G. IN ATTACKING "FORCES OF OBSCURITY" (DYNAMIS TOU SKOTOUS)) IN TELEVISED APPEARANCE YESTERDAY COARSE AND BENEATH DIGNITY OF LEADER OF CHURCH OF GREECE. CONSENSUS HERE IS MOVE WHOLLY POLITICAL AND PROCEEDS FROM LEONIDAS' CONTINUING CONFLICT WITH IOANNIDIS REGIME, NOTABLY MINED AND RELIGION PANAYIOTIS CHRISTOU (REFS AND CONGEN MEMCONS JAN 29 AND JUNE 20). THOUGHT ALSO HEARD THAT THIS BUT LATEST IN SERIES UNHAPPY EVENTS THAT HAVE RECENTLY BEFALLEN ALREADY UNCERTAIN AND INDECISIVE REGIME, NOTABLY MINISTERIAL RESIGNATIONS, AEGEAN CRISIS AND PROBLEMS IN CYPRUS. REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER LEONIDAS' MANY ADMIRERS AND FOLLOWERS HERE WILL CHOOSE TO MAKE ISSUE OF ACTION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, POLITICAL LEADERS, REMOVAL FROM OFFICE, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: shawdg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974THESSA00359
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740187-1106
From: THESSALONIKI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740752/aaaabsdm.tel
Line Count: 83
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: THESSALONIKI'S 0017, 020 AND 026.
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 MAY 2002 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <26 FEB 2003 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NORTHERN GREEK REACTION TO METROPOLITANS' OUSTER
TAGS: PINT, SGEN, SOCI, GR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005